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PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR

# SPIDER-MAN®

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# THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN IN.. RELAPSE TIMES THO!

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WITHIN THE LITTLE MASQUERADE SHOP, THE DARKNESS IS SO DENSE, THE SILENCE SO PALPABLE, IT SEEMS AS IF NOTHING COULD PENETRATE IT...

KAPOW! POW!

NOTHING, THAT IS, SAVE THE SOUND OF GUNSHOTS!

STILL, NOTHING SEEMS TO STIR, NONE OF THE FIGURES MOVE A MUSCLE.

UNTIL...

THAT WAS GUNFIRE.

COSTUMES

MELVIN POTTER, PROPRIETOR

NEARBY.

BUT THAT'S NONE OF *MY* BUSINESS.

WRONG, MELVIN...

...IT WILL SOON BECOME YOUR BUSINESS.

STOP, OR WE'LL SHOOT!

FREDDY--!

THEY'RE BLUFFIN'!

KEEP RUNNIN'!

I-I CAN'T! I'M NOT IN SHAPE!

BUT I WON'T BE CAUGHT JUST 'CAUSE I'M FAT!

KPOW!

ARRGH!

YOU OVERWEIGHT IDIOT! YOU MIGHT'VE JUST TURNED A CRUMMY ARMED ROBBERY INTO A *FELONY-MURDER!*

THEY'LL *NEVER* STOP CHASIN' US NOW!

BUT I THINK I KNOW A PLACE WHERE WE CAN HIDE!

COSTUMES

YEAH, A REAL GOOD PLACE!

DOOR'S LOCKED!

BUT BREAKIN' AN' ENTERIN'S THE LEAST WE GOTTA WORRY ABOUT TONIGHT!

WE'RE IN!

AN' THE COPS ARE OUT!

MIRACULOUSLY, THE PURSUING POLICE FAIL TO NOTICE THE SHATTERED DOOR PANE, AS THEY RACE PAST...

WE'RE SAFE! ≒WHEW!≒

WHAT'S GOING ON OUT HERE?

H-HUH?!
GEEZ! I THOUGHT THAT BIG GUY WAS JUST ANOTHER WAX DUMMY!
POTTER? *THE* MELVIN POTTER?!
MY NAME'S POTTER. I OWN THIS SHOP. ***GET OUT!*** I'M CLOSED.
THAT'S RIGHT, SAMMY. THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT US HERE.
WE'RE ON THE LAM, POTTER. YOU'RE GONNA HIDE US!
NO WAY. I'VE GOT A RECORD.
AND I'M NOT BLOWIN' PAROLE BY GETTIN' INVOLVED WITH YOU CHEAP HOODS.
POTTER--
--I *SAID* YOU WERE GONNA HIDE US!
KPOW!
*MY ARM--!*
*OUTSIDE...*
GUN-SHOT!
BACK THE WAY WE CAME!
THAT SHOT'LL ALERT THE COPS, MELVIN. YOU'RE ALREADY IMPLICATED JUST BY US BEIN' HERE.
YOU GOTTA DO *MORE* THAN JUST HIDE US NOW.
*YOU GOTTA HELP US!*
*LET'S GO!*
NOT... THAT!

ELSEWHERE, AT THAT EXACT MOMENT, **DOCTOR OTTO OCTAVIUS** MAKES HIS SELF-APPOINTED ROUNDS.

HIS DESTINATION: COLUMBIA PRESBY-TERIAN HOSPITAL...

...WHERE A CERTAIN **FELICIA HARDY** RECUPERATES FROM SOME VERY SEVERE WOUNDS--

--UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A VERY SPECIAL, BUT SOMEWHAT EXHAUSTED, BODYGUARD!

SUDDENLY...

≠MMNNN≠ ...N-NO!

KEEP AWAY...OCTOPUS! Y-YOU CAN'T HAVE... THE CAT! I WON'T LET YOU TAKE HER!

MEANWHILE...

I'M COMING, WALL-CRAWLER!

I'LL SOON BE THE DEATH OF YOU AND YOUR BELOVED *BLACK CAT!*

*ALERTING HIM TO HIS PRESENT DANGER, HIS **SPIDER-SENSE** CONTINUES TO TINGLE--*

*--BUT SPIDER-MAN CONTINUES DREAMING...*

I'LL... FIGHT YOU ...OCTOPUS!

I'LL FIGHT YOU!

YES, WALL-CRAWLER! YOU WILL FIGHT ME!

AND YOU WILL LOSE!

SKRASH!

H-HUH?

IT WASN'T A DREAM! *OCTOPUS IS HERE!*

STOP YOUR STRUGGLING, ARACHNID. I HAVE MADE YOU A PRISONER OF YOUR OWN WEBBING!

PAY ATTENTION AS I TELL YOU HOW YOU AND YOUR BELOVED BLACK CAT WILL SUFFER FOR ALL THE *AGONY* YOU'VE CAUSED ME.

NEVER MIND, DOC! I SEE THAT YOU'VE REATTACHED YOUR MECHANICAL ARMS

I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE LEARNED YOUR LESSON--

--AFTER THE WAY I TORE THEM OFF YOU THE LAST TIME WE MET!*

DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF! THE LAST TIME WE FOUGHT I WAS EXHAUSTED FROM TOO LITTLE SLEEP--AND ENCUMBERED BY THE INTERFERENCE OF *THE OWL!*

*SEE *SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #75!*

I AM RESTED NOW--AT THE PEAK OF MY POWER--AND I MEAN TO REVENGE MYSELF ON THOSE WHO BROUGHT ABOUT MY DEFEAT.

GIVE ME A BREAK! DON'T YOU EVER GIVE UP?!

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN, I HAVE THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH OF A SPIDER--AND I ALWAYS END UP PUTTING YOU AWAY!

NOT THIS TIME, SPIDER-MAN! I WILL HAVE MY VENGEANCE UPON YOU AND YOU WILL DIE--

--BUT *NOT* TONIGHT! THIS IS MERELY A SOCIAL CALL, A WARNING OF THINGS TO COME!

HUH? I DON'T GET IT!

OH, BUT YOU *WILL* GET IT, SPIDER-MAN!

AS WILL THE *BLACK CAT...*

...TOMORROW NIGHT!

TOMORROW NIGHT?

YES! I WANT YOU BOTH TO KNOW A NIGHT OF *FEAR!*

OF HELPLESS ANTICIPATION!

I WILL RETURN TO DESTROY YOU IN 24 HOURS--

--AND THERE WILL BE *NOTHING* YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT!

NOTHING EXCEPT BEAT THE STUFFINGS OUT OF YOU--AND SHIP YOU BACK TO PRISON--LIKE I'VE DONE EVERY OTHER TIME WE'VE FOUGHT!

NO, SPIDER-MAN, YOUR DAYS OF EASY VICTORIES, AND FORTUITOUS TRIUMPHS, ARE OVER!

H-HOLY SMOKES! HE USED HIS ARMS TO BLOCK MY WEBBING!

SWOK!

YOU WILL NEVER PREVAIL OVER MY POWER AGAIN!

*NEVER!*

WOW! OCK REALLY HIT ME HARD! HARD ENOUGH TO... KILL!

HE'S SOMEHOW INCREASED HIS STRENGTH! HE'S STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE!

THAT IS BUT A SAMPLE OF WHAT'S IN STORE FOR YOU, SPIDER-MAN!

AND THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THE *BLACK CAT!*

RRIIPPP

THE CAT'S *LIFE SUPPORT* SYSTEM!

OCTOPUS, YOU'LL KILL HER!

THAT'S THE POINT, ISN'T IT? AU REVOIR, ARACHNID-- AND THANK YOU FOR THIS EVENING'S ENCHANTING ENTERTAIN-MENT.

WHEN NEXT WE MEET, WE BATTLE --TO THE DEATH!

REEEEEEEEEE

CAN'T GO AFTER HIM-- NOT WITH FELICIA IN DANGER

*DOCTOR!* I NEED A DOCTOR!

WITHIN MOMENTS, A MEDICAL TEAM RACES IN, FOREWARNED BY THE LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM'S ALARM THAT THEIR PATIENT IS IN DANGER...

WH-WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

DOCTOR OCTOPUS!

WE'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, WALL-CRAWLER!

FOR THE SECOND TIME IN SO MANY DAYS SPIDER-MAN GIVES CARE OF THE CAT OVER TO OTHERS...

IN DOING SO, HE KNOWS A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH HE FELT YEARS AGO--WHEN HE FAILED TO SAVE HIS BELOVED UNCLE BEN...

SPIDER-MAN!

CAPTAIN DEWOLFF!

JEAN! WE'RE OLD FRIENDS, RIGHT? SO LET ME TALK TO YOU AS A FRIEND.

WE'VE GOT TO MOVE THE CAT TO A MORE SECURE HOSPITAL NOW THAT WE KNOW OCTOPUS IS AFTER HER.

NO! WE CAN'T MOVE THE CAT! HER CONDITION'S TOO UNSTABLE! WE COULD END UP KILLING HER OURSELVES!

BESIDES, THERE'S NOWHERE WE CAN HIDE HER FROM OTTO OCTAVIUS!

WHAT DO WE DO THEN?

OCTOPUS SAID HE'LL BE BACK TOMORROW. YOUR PEOPLE CAN GUARD THE CAT TONIGHT.

AND YOU?

ME, CAPTAIN?

I'LL BE GETTING READY FOR THE BIGGEST BATTLE OF MY LIFE!

A SLENDER STRAND OF WEBBING CARRIES THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN THROUGH THE NIGHT.

BELOW HIM, EIGHT MILLION STORIES ARE BEING ENACTED BY EIGHT MILLION BEINGS.

BUT THOSE TALES ARE AS INSIGNIFICANT TO HIM NOW AS ARE HIS PHOTO WORK, HIS GRADUATE STUDIES, AND HIS CAREER . . .

NOTHING MATTERS SAVE THE FATE OF A WOUNDED WOMAN THE AMAZING ARACHNID THINKS HE LOVES-- FELICIA HARDY, THE BEAUTIFUL BLACK CAT.

BUT LIFE HAS A WAY OF INTRUDING UPON ONE'S ISOLATION.

COSTUMES

NYC POLICE

WONDER WHAT'S UP?

WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!

NYC PD 112435

COME OUT--OR WE'LL USE TEAR GAS!

COS MELVIN

NO ANSWER...

AND SO...

PYOOM

BUT THEN...

GET READY! HERE THEY COME!

YES, HERE THEY COME...

ALL RIGHT, MELVIN! ÷KOFF≤ YOU'RE ON!

STRUT YOUR STUFF! GET US ÷KOFF≤ PAST 'EM!

YEAH! ÷KOFF≤ SHOW WHY YOU'RE CALLED... THE GLADIATOR!

MELVIN POTTER HAD SWORN NEVER TO DON THE GLADIATOR'S ARMOR AGAIN

QUIT STALLIN', MELVIN!

YEAH! STOP ÷KOFF≤ PRETENDIN' YOUR HEART AIN'T IN THIS!

HE HAD PROMISED HIMSELF, HIS ATTORNEY, AND SOCIETY THAT HE HAD GONE STRAIGHT-- THAT THE GLADIATOR WAS DEAD.

SCHWIZZZ

THESE FELONS RESURRECTED HIM.

IS THIS, THEN, HIS DESTINY?

HOTEL REXITE

SCHUNK

THE HUGE SIGN CRASHES TO THE STREET...

...BLOCKING THE HAIL OF BULLETS HURLED BY BOTH SIDES.

I REALLY OUGHTA KEEP OUT OF THIS ONE! THE GLADIATOR USUALLY SEEMS TO FIGHT *DAREDEVIL* --AND I ALREADY HAVE ENOUGH PROBLEMS OF MY OWN!

THWIP!

AH, WHO AM I KIDDING?!

THE GLADIATOR STEPS BACK FROM THE GUNFIRE...

HIS PREVIOUSLY WOUNDED ARM BEGINS TO THROB...

BUT THEN...

ARRGH!

SWOK

WHAT'RE *YOU* CRYING "ARRGH!" ABOUT? I'M THE ONE WHO ALMOST BROKE HIS KNUCKLES ON THAT STUPID STEEL-PLATED FACE MASK OF YOURS!

=SHEESH= EVEN SPIDER-STRENGTH HAS ITS LIMITS!

I--I DON'T BELIEVE IT! SPIDER-MAN DROPPED MELVIN WITH ONE PUNCH!

STOP GAWKING --AND DRILL HIM!

DRILL ME? WHAT IS THIS-- A *DENTAL CONVENTION*?

I SEE ONE CAVITY THAT NEEDS FILLING!

YOU BOYS ARE SOON GOING TO BE IN DESPERATE NEED OF ANESTHESIA--

--'CAUSE I'M ABOUT TO GIVE YOU A COLLECTIVE *TOOTHACHE!*

*THE BLOOD POURS FROM THE BULLET-HOLE IN HIS ARM --*

*--STAINING MELVIN POTTER'S COSTUME!*

*THE PAIN CLOUDS HIS MIND --*

*--COLORING HIS PERCEPTIONS!*

LOOKS LIKE THE GLADIATOR'S IN THE CLEAR! THESE JERKS CLAIM THEY FORCED HIM TO HELP THEM!

NO WONDER HE DIDN'T TRY TO HURT ANYONE!

BUT, MELVIN POTTER'S VINDICATION HAS COME TOO LATE! HIS FANTASIES HAVE SURFACED AGAIN--THE FANTASIES HE'D FOUGHT SO LONG TO SUBMERGE!

I-- I AM A WARRIOR OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE!

M-MUST KEEP FIGHTING! C-CAN'T DISGRACE MY EMPEROR!

HE IS NO LONGER MELVIN POTTER! HE IS ONLY THE GLADIATOR!

HE EXISTS ONLY TO DO BATTLE... UNTO DEATH!

DANGER --BEHIND ME!

MY SPIDER-SENSE WARNED ME IN PLENTY OF TIME TO LEAP TO SAFETY--BUT I CAN'T LEAVE THESE COPS BEHIND!

GET DOWN! HURRY!

WHAT THE--?!

THE GLADIATOR AT-TACKED ME--BUT WHY?

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, MAN?

WE KNOW YOU'RE INNOCENT! WHY'D YOU DO IT?

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE? THERE'S NO REASON TO FIGHT ANYMORE!

Y'KNOW SOMETHING, GUY, I REALLY DON'T THINK WE'RE COMMUNICATING ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH!

THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO REASON FOR US TO CONTINUE THIS FIGHT! NONE! ZIP-O! UNDERSTAND?

SLASH!

WHAT GIVES, YOU BIG DOPE? DO YOU WANT TO GO BACK TO JAIL? THE COPS WILL HAVE TO TAKE YOU IN IF YOU KEEP ACTING LIKE THIS!

YOUR BONES WILL BLEACH IN THE ARENA FOR THAT INDIGNITY!

SKKRAKK

EMPEROR? ARENA?

WHAT IS THIS-- *BEN HUR II?!*

DON'T WALK

YOU HAVE SHAMED ME BEFORE MY EMPEROR!

HEY, I JUST REMEMBERED READING ABOUT THE GLADIATOR! HIS LAWYER, MATT MURDOCK, CLAIMED THAT POTTER USED TO SUFFER FROM DELUSIONS-- *

--THAT HE REALLY THOUGHT HE WAS A WARRIOR LIVING IN ANCIENT ROME!

I WONDER IF THOSE CROOKS SET HIM OFF ALL OVER AGAIN?

110th ST.

BROADWAY

DON'T WALK

*SEE DAREDEVIL #166, 173, 174 & 186!

LISTEN TO ME, MELVIN!

YOU'RE ONLY MAKING THINGS WORSE!

YOU'RE NOT IMPLICATED IN ANY CRIME YET --BUT YOU MAY BE IF YOU KEEP THIS UP!

DON'T LET THESE CLOWNS MAKE A FOOL OF YOU! YOU'VE DONE NOTHING WRONG!

THROUGH THE POUNDING IN HIS EARS...

...THE GLADIATOR HEARS.

HE HEARS... AND HE UNDERSTANDS WHAT'S BEEN DONE TO HIM.

UH, MELVIN--?

THEY USED ME! TRIED TO HURT ME!

OH, MY GOSH! I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK IN POTTER'S EYES!

H-HE'S TURNING ON US!

STAY BACK, GLADIATOR! THESE MEN ARE IN POLICE CUSTODY!

DON'T DO IT, MELVIN!

THEY HURT ME!

THEY MUST PAY!

SHRAKK

THWIP!

USING HIS AMAZING SPIDER-LIKE ABILITY TO ADHERE TO ANY SURFACE, THE WEB-SPINNER CLINGS TO THE STREET -- AND INSTANTLY STOPS THE GLADIATOR'S FORWARD PROGRESS...

BUT THEN...

NO! THEY HURT ME! THEY USED ME! THEY MADE ME REMEMBER EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED SO HARD TO FORGET!

FORGET THEM, MELVIN! LET THE COPS HAVE THEM!

THE COURTS WILL MAKE 'EM PAY

OH, NO! I'M NOT ANCHORED! HE'S JUST DRAGGING ME ALONG LIKE I WAS JUST SO MUCH GARBAGE!

DON'T THROW YOUR LIFE AWAY!

UH-OH! HIS WRIST-BLADES MANAGED TO SLICE RIGHT THROUGH MY WEBBING!

THEY MUST BE TAUGHT A *LESSON!*

STAY BACK, POTTER! WE DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU!

WHAT ABOUT US? YOU'RE *COPS!* YOU CAN'T LET 'IM HAVE US!

WHY NOT? YOU CRUDS *SHOT* A COP EARLIER THIS EVENING!

SO WHAT! YA CAN'T GIVE US TO THE GLADIATOR! THAT WOULD BE MURDER!

DON'T WORRY! WE'LL PROTECT YOU--EVEN THOUGH YOU TURN MY STOMACHS!

ENOUGH! NO ONE CAN STOP ME! NOTHING CAN STAND IN MY WAY!

I KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE!

MELVIN...

**NO!**

**ZWWWINNG**

SCHUNNG

NO, NOTHING CAN STOP ME--

--FROM ENDING MY LIFE AS *THE GLADIATOR!*

I'LL THANK YOU, OFFICER, FOR GETTING THESE SCUM OUT OF MY SIGHT.

*THAT THE POLICE DO.*

*AND...*

SPIDER-MAN, I OWE YOU A GREAT DEBT OF GRATITUDE. I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF YOU HAD NOT INTERFERED!

I OWE YOU! HOW CAN I EVER REPAY YOU?

UH, YOU RUN A ***COSTUME SHOP,*** RIGHT? HOW ARE YOU AT REPAIRING SPIDER-SUITS?

NO ONE WIELDS A WICKEDER NEEDLE!

Y'KNOW, GLADIATOR OLD PAL, THIS COULD BE THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP!

*AND SO, THE NIGHT PASSES...*

**TOMORROW: *THE LONG GOODBYE!***